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THE NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, JANUARY 8,

631 Cultists' Bodies Wait in Delaware Base Hangar

DOVER, Del., Jan. 7 (AP) — More than six weeks after the mass deaths at the Guyana commune of the People's Temple, the bodies of 631 victims remain stacked in a freezing airplane hangar at the Dover Air Force Base, and the Federal Government has no plans to move them.

"It looks like no one wants to do anything," Charles Wyman, a State Department lawyer assigned here.

"I was told in no uncertain terms that the Government has neither the authority nor the funds to release the bodies," he said last week, referring to a State Department policy decision.

Meanwhile, he said, many relatives have told the State Department that they cannot afford to transport and bury or cremate the bodies. He said that many were apparently waiting for the Government or some charitable group to pay the costs.

Next of kin have been notified of the deaths of 585 positively identified cult members, but 353 of those bodies remained unclaimed at the base last week.

The unclaimed bodies and 278 unidentified ones are stacked in Government-purchased coffins in an old, unheated hangar in subfreezing temperatures. A single guard patrols the area around the clock.

"I don't know what the solution is going to be," Mr. Wyman said. "Obviously, there's going to be a solution. We can't leave them there in the hangar."

He said that Air Force pathologists in Washington were still trying to identify more of the bodies, but that the pace had slowed considerably. Only two bodies have been identified since Dec. 19.

Last month, Gov. Pierre S. du Pont 4th asked President Carter to have the military fly the bodies to San Francisco, where the cult began and where many of the relatives live. But Mr. Carter has not responded, the Governor's news secretary, Frederick Stern, said.

Both Mr. du Pont and Dover's Mayor, Charles A. Legates Jr., have insisted that no mass burial be made near Dover because the site may become a shrine for cult members.

Representative Thomas B. Evans Jr. met with State Department officials two weeks ago to press for quick disposal of the bodies, but Mr. Wyman denied his report that the department had promised a decision by Feb. 1.

Delaware has allowed local undertakers to transport the bodies out of state but has prevented local burial or cremation by requiring death certificates, which must be issued in Guyana.

Mr. Wyman said that the first 599 death certificates arrived in Washington yesterday, but Battle R. Robinson, assistant counsel to Governor du Pont, said that other Delaware laws could prohibit a mass cremation of the bodies here.

For instance, Mrs. Robinson said, Delaware requires a cremation certificate signed by a physician or coroner stating that there is no reason not to destroy a particular body. She said that the bodies might still be needed because of lingering questions about the cause of death.

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